rightly reject the unchristian attitudes and thinking we have been doing. — *Robert Barkley, Community Church of Christ, Brownwood, TX.*

My hope is that by 2009 we can have all the Christian Churches meet together in Pittsburgh. Together we stand, divided we fall. —*Larry Toney, First Christian Church (Disciples), New Kensington, PA.*

(Larry is bicentennial-minded. The year 2009 will be the bicentennial year for the publication of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address.* In 1909 the gathering in Pittsburgh was one of the most significant in our history. My hope is that by 2009 we will have all accepted each other as equals on the basis of the Lordship of Christ, thus making sectarianism among us a thing of the past. And we don't have to wait until 2009 for that. In that year let us be able to say that we have at last understood and acted upon the great principles of unity set forth by Thomas Campbell in 1809. —*Ed.*)

Though one memorize the whole Bible and believed it to be inspired and inerrant, he might still be lost. Yet another may never have seen a Bible but only heard the gospel preached, and be committed to Jesus Christ as Lord of his life, and be saved. —*Harold Fox, Edgar, NE.*

When I read in Roger Woodward's unity presentation that there is a revolution going on, I said, *Hallelujah!* —*Edna Stapleton, Terre Haute, IN.*

For many years I have noticed that when we have a series of gospel meetings that our preachers take up most of the time justifying our position on name, instrumental music, and the like, and they hardly ever get around to preaching Jesus to the lost world. So it is with our radio programs. The apostles preached Christ and him crucified. What do you suppose the result might be if all our preachers did likewise? —*Missouri* (Name withheld)

My family and I will be returning to Kenya this year, God willing, sponsored by both Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. For more than 27 years I have had the unity of our divided fellowships on my heart. Now, at last, I pray that I may have a small part in bringing that unity about both in Kenya and with those who support our mission. I would appreciate hearing from any churches or individuals who might be sympathetic. I am finding warm reception from Christian Churches, but Churches of Christ, even when they are in favor of what we are attempting, are reluctant to help us. They fear "the brotherhood." I especially need the support of a few brave Churches of Christ. —*James Moore, 7886 NW 40th, Bethany, OK 73008, (405) 495-3575.*

Chester Woodhall and his daughter were recently videotaping some outdoor scenes for Television Zambia. Since there is presently a crocodile epidemic in Zambia, they kept an eye out for any sign of those critters. Then came a green snake slithering across the set during the recording. The Woodhalls do a lot of radio and TV programs but snakes do not normally attend! —*Angela Woodhall, Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.*

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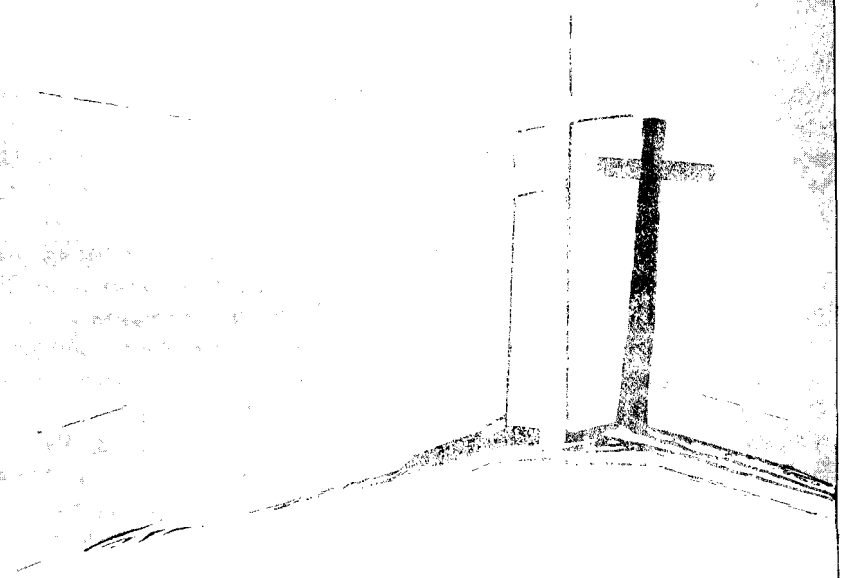

Are our differences of such magnitude that they overshadow the common faith we confess in our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Messiah? Because we may not in everything see eye to eye, can we not do anything shoulder to shoulder? —*Robert O. Fife*

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Volume 29, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June, 1987**

The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation

WHY READ THE SCRIPTURES?

(The Right Reason Is the Best Rule of Interpretation)

The ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. —Ps. 19:9-10

As we consider the matter of reading the Bible we are to be reminded that Bible-reading is largely a modern phenomenon, for until recent generations most people in the world did not and could not read the Bible. One reason was because there were no Bibles for them to read, certainly not until long after the invention of the printing press in about 1450. Until then all books had to be copied by hand, which made them very valuable. This is why Bibles were chained to pulpits.

But even when books began to be produced on the printing press, they were still expensive and most Christians were too poor to own one. Besides, the majority of them was illiterate and unable to read any book. Mass literacy, wealth that allows for the purchase of books, and world-wide circulation of the Bible are recent developments in human history. Our ancient brethren could not have imagined such a world as ours, where we can have a Bible in every room and in several translations. This is of course true mostly of only the "Western" world. The Bible is still unavailable to many people in undeveloped countries. Poverty and illiteracy are yet major problems throughout the world, even in our own country.

This is why the Bible itself has little to say about *private* reading. In the Bible when the Scriptures are referred to as being read it is *public* reading, such as Rev. 1:3: "Blessed is he who reads (aloud) the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near." Col. 4:16 is also to the point: "When this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read the letter from Laodicea." This is why 1 Tim. 4:13 is to be rendered as the RSV has it: "Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching."

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In passing we might remind ourselves of a costly neglect in our churches: *effective, interpretive reading of the Scriptures.* Bible reading that is taken seriously! It is noteworthy that there is far more in the Bible about *reading* the Scriptures to the congregation than there is *preaching* sermons. There is considerable of the former and none of the latter!

There is an occasional reference to private reading of Scripture, such as in the case of the Eunuch in Acts 8 (unless we presume he was reading to his driver!). We do know that he was reading aloud since Philip the evangelist heard him. But again, that was the ancient world where apparently all reading was aloud. Silent reading and speed reading belong to the modern world. You will remember that even the kings in the Old Testament were always having stuff read to them, as in Jer. 36 where Jehoiakim had his secretary read what Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch — and proceeded to slash the leaves with his penknife and cast them into the fire. It probably was not uncommon for kings to be illiterate, and so the scribes would read to them. But all reading was aloud, even when one read only to himself.

While in the overall history of the church believers have *listened* to the Scriptures more than they have *read* them, the question we raise remains the same. Why consult the Scriptures, whether by hearing or by seeing? If we approach the Bible for the right reason or reasons, we will likely be responsible interpreters. Reading with the wrong motive will sidetrack us and send us off in the wrong direction.

While I appreciate that old German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, when he emphasized duty as the basic virtue of life, I am persuaded that Bible study should eventually reach beyond duty as a motive. It may be better to read out of duty than not to read at all, but we can move up higher. And even if Aristotle was right that the virtuous life is built around good habit patterns, Bible reading should be more than habitual. True, it may become habitual and properly so, but the habit has been formed for one reason or another.

Then there are the less acceptable motives, such as to find confirmation for our preconceived conclusions, to see only what we want to see, or to arm ourselves so that we can win an argument. Some read out of curiosity, which is better than some motives. Exciting things often happen to curious minds.

After giving some thought as to what should motivate us as we take the Bible in hand, I suggest the following, which might be viewed as motivation for Bible reading.

1. *The disclosure of the mind of God.*

It makes all the difference if we believe that God reveals himself in the pages of the Bible. His revelation may not be in every verse or even on every page, and certainly not in every incident or every narrative, but the

Bible is a unique book in that it discloses the mind of God — as much as paper and ink can disclose the mind of God. So this is to be our basic motivation: we read and study the Bible because we beleive God speaks to us in its pages. We therefore are to search for the mind of God in the holy Scriptures, and this is why they are *holy*, because His word is there. This is why we are to pray as well as to read. We can pray as did the psalmist: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18). Paul prayed that "the eyes of your hearts" might be enlightened" (Eph. 1:18), which assures us that if the Holy Spirit is not our teacher in Bible reading we are not likely to discern the will of God. In 1 Jn. 2 it is made plainer still: "You have been anointed by the Holy One" (v. 20); "the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything" (v. 27).

When we are so motivated — "Holy Spirit of God, open my inner eyes even now as I study your word" — we position ourselves to hear what the Bible says to us. Alexander Campbell had an interesting way of putting this as he named what he believed to be the most important rule of Bible study: *We must come within understanding distance.* This means our minds must be eager and our hearts open. To know God must be more precious to us than gold, even much fine gold, and sweeter to our taste than the drippings of the honeycomb. If prejudice, pride, willful ignorance, or partyism keeps us out-of-range and beyond understanding distance, we are doomed to walk in darkness.

2. *The unmasking and disclosure of self.*

We also are to come to the Bible with the realization that it tells us about ourselves. What we really are is laid open as if by the surgeon's scapel. There is no way to survive before an open Bible without being honest. Thus Jas. 1:25 says "He who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and *perseveres*," which means to remain honest with God and self, "being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing." If the poet Alexander Pope was right that "An honest man is the noblest work of God," it can also be said that it is the honest man who will find the will of God for his life in the Scriptures.

Few things impressed our Lord as did an honest and good heart. "If any one wills to do God's will, he shall know," he is reported in Jn. 7:17 to have said to people who appeared to be less than honest. Here we have just about the only rule of interpretation anyone needs: *an honest, sincere, seeking heart.* The promise stands sure that if one seeks he will find. But honesty implies a willingness to look deeply within one's own soul and face up to his sins and weaknesses. Jesus was impressed with a soul like that who was willing to pray, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

3. *The Bible is one of the books that Jesus read.*

How about that for a good reason to read the Bible, because Jesus did? There are surprising things about our Lord, who knew no sin. He not only prayed but prayed agonizingly. He walked many miles to be baptized. We think of baptism and praying as things sinners would need to do. If John was resistant to the idea of Jesus being baptized, we might in a similar way insist that he would not need to read or study.

He was a student of at least three "books," the book of nature, the book of human nature, and the book of Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament. He spoke often of sowing and reaping, birds and lilies, rain and storm, clouds and fields. He read deeply in the book of the natural world. And he knew what was in man, the good and the bad, and the toll taken by pride, selfishness, and hypocrisy. He knew both childishness and child-likeness, and that man can be like a dove as well as like a serpent or a fox. Jesus knew human nature like a book.

It should impress us as we make our way through the Old Testament that our Lord poured over these same Scriptures. If he needed "the hope and comfort of the Scriptures," as Ro. 15:4 describes the Old Testament, how much more do we. And he had his favorite passages, one of which was Micah 6:6, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings," which he quoted more than once in an effort to show the Pharisees the nature of true religion. It is noteworthy that Jesus found two things especially in the Scriptures that made a great difference in his life: his own mission as one sent of God in fulfillment of prophecy and the great truth that the heavenly Father is a God of mercy. On two different occasions (Mt. 9:13 and Mt. 12:7) Jesus appealed to Scripture to enforce the great principle of mercy, that God desires compassion more than an exact conformity to externals. If when we come to the Bible we learn no more than this we would be doing very well indeed.

4. *God is in control and history in the end will turn out right.*

If for no other reason we should read the Scriptures in order to read this glorious promise: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). The "promise" referred to goes all the way back to the prophets in the Old Testament.

One day righteousness will rule over a new earth! To believe it is to believe the Bible. In our shattered and battered world such a promise makes life meaningful. However awry things may seem we can be assured that God is up to something and in God's tomorrow it will turn out God's way. We have all seen building sites that appear to have no order to them, with a pile of gravel here and a stack of rubbish there, and hardly more than a muddy hole in the ground for a building. But if we know the architect

we can believe that one day the messed-up site will be transformed into a thing of beauty and usefulness.

We are all bewildered by some of the gruesome facts about our world, such as there being 12,000,000 hungry children, most of whom are beyond our power to help. The "building site" may appear insane as well as askew, but we believe in Him who sits upon the throne and *speaks*: "Behold, I make all things new." That is the way the end of the Book reads. We trust the Architect and so we believe that order, beauty, and victory will come out of chaos, ugliness, and defeat. But where do we have such hope but in the Bible?

5. *The wonderful Person of the Bible.*

There is no greater motivation for turning to Scripture than that it tells us about Jesus. When our desire is to know him more clearly, follow him more nearly, and love him more dearly, as a Scottish divine liked to pray, then the Bible is the book for us, for he is the wonderful Person that is revealed there.

The Roman philosopher Epictetus taught that if you want to make a person happy add not to his possessions but take away from his desires, which is a judgment upon our thing-oriented world. But it might be that if one will but *change* his desires he will find happiness. We sing, "O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer!" To really mean that, to covet Christ-likeness, is both our victory and our joy. When we read the Bible with a desire to become more like Christ — a friend like he is Friend, compassionate like him, loving like him, forgiving like him, and wholly devoted to doing the Father's will as he was — we read it with the right heart and mind. And we are not likely to go far astray in understanding it if we read it in quest of the mind of Christ.

This means that the Bible is not the end in itself, but the Person that it reveals. It isn't the Bible we desire to know, but Jesus. Even the Bible must always be brought to the judgment bar of the Spirit of Christ.

6. *There is no other book to which to turn.*

An important reason for reading the Bible in our search for reality is simply that there is no other book to which to turn. The wisest thing the impulsive Peter ever said was when he replied to Jesus' question, "Do you also want to go away?" with these impressive words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Those who turn to psychology, philosophy, or even theology will be disappointed. There is no hope in the wisdom of men or in the systems men build. We must agree with Peter that there is simply no one else or nothing else to which we can turn except Jesus Christ.

And if you read the Bible with that kind of spirit, no one need worry about you being "in error," certainly not in reference to what really matters — or *who* really matters! —*the Editor*

ACAPPELLA MUSIC: THE REAL ISSUE

> In the very beginning of this effort to reform religious society, the subject matter of a saving or essential faith was distinguished both from the uninspired deductions of human reason, and from those divine teachings which, however necessary to enable the believer to make proper advances in Christian knowledge, are by no means necessary to the Christian faith. —Robert Richardson, *Millennial Harbinger,* 1848, p. 698.

I urge you to study this statement with care, for it comes from the man that Alexander Campbell described as knowing more about the unity movement he had launched than anyone else, Robert Richardson, who was Mr. Campbell's physician as well as a fellow professor and associate editor. Once I discuss some things being said about acappella music, I want us to come back to this statement and evaluate it, for it states the essence of what we are supposed to stand for as heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement. And all in one sentence, even if it is a cumbersome one.

Some years back a professor at Abilene Christian University published a book on *The Case for Acappella Singing,* and this year the 20th Century Press in Nashville is issuing the title *Sing His Praise! A Case for A Cappella Music As Worship Today.* It is a subject we will not let die even if there is not much said about it anymore from our pulpits. To many if not most of our folk in Churches of Christ "the instrument question" is a dead issue, but there are some who will not allow it to go away.

If we are going to discuss it, we should make it clear what the issue really is. And the issue is *not* whether there is a case for acappella singing as these books imply. The universal Church of God has been singing acappella all these centuries, long before what we call the non-instrument Church of Christ existed. All denominations sometimes sing acappella, and there are some choirs that are exclusively acappella. Someone outside our circles would surely think it strange that anyone would write a book on making a case for acappella music. His response could be, "A case for acappella singing? I didn't know anyone questioned it."

If the books were titled *A Case for Making Instrumental Music A Test of Fellowship,* they would at least point up the real issue. But our scholars will not write such a book, for they know they would be on shaky ground. We can opt for acappella music as our opinion or our preference. We could even say that for *us* instrumental music would be a sin, for it would violate our conscience. But for us to insist that it is a sin for others to use an instrument and that it will damn their souls to hell is a judgment we have no right to make. And that is the issue: do we have the right to make the instrument a *test* and thus reject our sisters and brothers in other churches, even the Christian Church, because they use a piano?

A professor at David Lipscomb wrote in the *Gospel Advocate* some years back to the effect that our young people should not be ashamed that we do not use instruments. It seems that some of them were embarrassed with their peer group that we do not have instruments like other churches do. I can't imagine many of our young people having that much concern over the instrument, *pro* or *con*, but the professor's admonition again dodged the issue. Of course our young people should not be ashamed of the absence of an organ, but should they be ashamed when their church preaches that all other churches are not true churches because they *do* have an organ? It is not our practice that is the issue, but the judgment we make of others who differ with us. Can't we believe we are right without believing everyone else is wrong?

Let us now examine Richardson's statement on what our "founding fathers" were trying to do. Is he not identifying two propositions that were recognized as valid from the very beginning of what came to be called "the Plea"? I will reduce the statement to plainer language.

A difference was made between saving or essential faith and the deductions of human reason or opinions.

A difference was made between saving or essential faith and those other teachings of the Bible, which, however important they are in advancing one in Christian knowledge, are not essential to being a Christian.

Our position in the Churches of Christ on instrumental music violates both principles laid down by our pioneers, which they in turn deduced from the freedom in Christ as set forth in Scripture. The question of instrumental music is obviously *not* a matter of saving or essential faith, but rather our own deduction from human reason, based not upon what the Bible says but the silence of the Bible. So we fail to make the vital distinction that our pioneers did between faith and human reason.

Even more devastating is our failure on the second proposition, for even if we believe that instrumental music is part of "the divine teaching" that builds us up in Christ once we are saved, we must distinguish between such teaching and the essential faith that makes one a Christian. This means that one might be innocently wrong on something the Bible actually teaches, such as the ministry of the Holy Spirit — or instrumental music if indeed it is in that category — and still be a faithful Christian in that he has saving or essential faith. This means that we must recognize that one might be wrong about instrumental music and still be a faithful Christian.

Richardson could have said, as he does elsewhere, that our forebears distinguished between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ongoing teaching of the apostles. The gospel was proclaimed in its fullness on Pentecost, and this is the basis of saving or essential faith, to believe in and obey Jesus Christ in baptism. The apostles went on for years to come to build up the

didache, the teaching of the church, inspired as they were by the Holy Spirit. It is the gospel that saves; it is the teaching that builds up those who are saved. The gospel enrolled them in school; the teaching was the curriculum they were taught in school.

But God's children are sometimes slow learners. Some are even retarded. Some are far in advance of others. So we are all at different points in our development or at different levels in the school of Christ. So, along the way we will be mistakenly in error about some things. But this does not affect our essential faith in Christ, saving faith. If we cannot be wrong about some things and still be saved, then we are all doomed.

All this means that our pioneers are trying to show us that we must make the distinctions that the Scriptures make. When we do this we will have a more moderate view on instrumental music. In fact, we will come to concede that "the music question" has nothing to do with being saved and is a non issue when it comes to accepting other Christians as equals. Instrumental music can be made no more than a matter of one's own conscience and congregational preference. And when we come to that position we will be freer in Christ, more loving and accepting Christians, and a more responsible part of the Body of Christ at large. *—the Editor*

Highlights in Restoration History . . .

OUR FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST WAS A BAPTIST CHURCH

While in this essay I refer to the Brush Run Church, founded by Thomas and Alexander Campbell in 1811, as the first Church of Christ, it is to be understood that I am referring only to the Campbell wing of the Movement. The Barton W. Stone churches were Churches of Christ before the Campbells came on the scene, as were those churches started by the Republican Methodists under the leadership of James O'Kelly and Rice Haggard as early as 1794, reformers who eventually became "Christians only" and called themselves Christian Churches or Churches of Christ.

Since the Campbell influence eventually predominated and became the mainstream of the growing Movement, it is understandable that Brush Run would be looked to as the beginning congregation.

I will also be forgiven for not going back to 33 A.D. and the Jerusalem church as our first church. If I were speaking ecumenically or of the church universal, I would of course go back to Pentecost, for that is

the original birthplace of all who profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ and members of his Body. But if other denominations trace their origins back to such places as Geneva, Oxford, and Wittenberg (and not Jerusalem!), it is appropriate for us to recognize that we as Churches of Christ-Christian Churches also have our origin as a denomination distinct from others. So we go back to Bethany and Brush Run.

This mental quirk of ours that supposes we can ignore two thousand years of history and thus identify ourselves as the only true successor of the original church — even to engraving "Established 33 A.D." on our cornerstones — caught the eye of an enterprising history buff. He saw such a cornerstone on a Church of Christ in Eastland, Texas. Years later he took a friend by to see this phenomenon, only to learn that the church had erected a new building and the cornerstone was not put into the new structure (Real progress, I'd say!). Not satisfied, the man recovered the old cornerstone from a landfill, and arranged for it to be stored at Texas Christian University as a kind of relic of the past. Unfortunately, the mentality that was once engraved on cornerstones has not been completely erased from our minds.

The Churches of Christ-Christian Churches as we know them today did not exist in the first century nor for almost 1800 years thereafter. We grew out of a 19th century reformation-unity movement led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. Not only is it wise for us to recognize what is an obvious historical fact, but to learn the lessons that our own history can teach us — if we will but heed those lessons!

If ever you have opportunity to visit Bethany, which is not far from either Washington, Pa. or Wheeling, W. Va., you can also visit the site of the old Brush Run Church, which is only a few miles away. The area is now fenced off and is suitable for picnics and pilgrimages, but there is no church there. The old building, once the congregation moved into Bethany in about 1827, was moved and used as a blacksmith shop for a time. Some history buffs, realizing its significance, eventually recovered some of the lumber and it is now stored in Bethany. It might one day be restored but we don't know for sure what it looked like.

But there are some interesting facts about our first church that might stimulate our thinking as to who we should be in the 1980's.

1. The Campbells did not intend to start a church. They had created the Christian Association of Washington (Pa.) as a unity effort among all the denominations, and its members remained in their own churches. But because of "the continued hostility of the different parties," as Robert Richardson puts it in the *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Thomas Campbell at last felt compelled to do what he was reluctant to do, start an independent church. So on May 4, 1811, the Brush Run Church was organized.

2. Our people have always struggled with what name to use, and it was no different at Brush Run. It was first called First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, but eventually Church of Christ was used, the name that is still engraved in stone above the door of the church they afterward erected in Bethany, which has recently been renovated and open to visitors. Too, when the Brush Run Church started a church in Wellsburg in 1823, with 32 of its members serving as charter members, including Alexander and Margaret Campbell and a young woman named Selina Bakewell who five years later would become the second Mrs. Campbell upon the death of Margaret, it was named as a Church of Christ.

3. When Brush Run was first organized and for some months afterward there was not a single member that had been baptized by immersion. When three members requested immersion, Thomas Campbell accommodated them by dipping them as he knelt on a root. Afterwards critics of the Campbells poked fun at this, referring to it as "root baptism." This odd incident may be due more to Campbell's ignorance of how people were usually immersed, having never seen an instance of it, than to his reluctance to get into the water himself. The following year, 1812, both of the Campbells and their wives, along with other members at Brush Run, were immersed by a Baptist minister. At the outset Brush Run accepted people on the basis of their being baptized by sprinkling, and would immerse only those who had not been baptized at all. Eventually however it became an immersionist church. Those who could not accept immersion only left the church.

4. Oddly enough, as much as Thomas Campbell eschewed anything sectarian at this time, he devised a creedal statement that was used as a basis of membership. It read, "What is the meritorious cause of a sinner's acceptance with God?" Only two prospective members could not give a satisfactory response and their membership was postponed. But this test question was soon dropped, due largely to the objection of Alexander Campbell.

5. The Brush Run Church was considered a Baptist church as long as it existed, belonging as it did to the Redstone Baptist Association. And Alexander Campbell was recognized as a Baptist minister, even if different, at least until the "Reformed Baptists," as they were called, became a separate group known as Disciples of Christ in 1832. It is noteworthy that the Campbells always endeavored to align their earliest congregations with some denominational association. Thomas Campbell even wanted his Christian Association of Washington associated with the Presbyterians, but they would not accept it. Their second church in Wellsburg belonged to the Mahoning Baptist Association, and their third church in Pittsburgh applied to the Redstone but was rejected. The Baptists must have figured that one

maverick church was enough. But still the Campbells always sought denominational affiliation.

6. The Campbells believed in a formal ordination to office even from the outset, and the Brush Run Church formally ordained Alexander Campbell to the ministry. Thomas Campbell served as the only elder and there were four deacons. Plurality of elders came later.

7. From the very first Sunday, before they had a building and met under the trees, they observed the Lord's supper each Lord's day. They were influenced in this by the reformatory efforts of the Haldanes back in the old world from which they came.

These historical facts about the first Church of Christ pose some searching questions for us today, especially in reference to unity and fellowship. We can ask, first of all, if Brush Run was a true church when it did not have a single member that was immersed. Were the Campbells Christians before they were immersed? Could we accept the Alexander Campbell that was recognized for years as a Baptist minister? And is it not odd that the first Church of Christ was actually a Baptist church, belonging as it did to a Baptist association of churches? How would a Church of Christ be accepted among us today if it chose to affiliate itself with some denominational fraternity?

Brush Run sets the tone for us in one special way, and that is it learned quickly how to overcome the sectarian spirit. While at first they had a "test question," the correct answer to which gained membership, they soon dropped it as inappropriate, and based membership upon one faith and one baptism rather than theological opinions.

I fear that we have not done so well. We make a "test" over everything from instrumental music and Sunday Schools to premillennialism and speaking in tongues. Our creeds may not be written but they are nonetheless real. Many times I have heard the same story of how visiting Christians were graciously accepted at a Church of Christ until it became known that back home they were members of a Christian Church. That they had an organ in their church back in Ohio affected the way they were treated in a Church of Christ in Texas! And I have been among Christian Church folk when your acceptance depended on what you believed about the inerrancy of Scripture, and I once got myself in real trouble at a Christian Church when I observed that Billy Graham was our brother in the Lord and a member of the Christian church even if a Baptist. They didn't like my definition of the Christian church!

Bully for Brush Run! They started with that kind of nonsense but ceased and desisted when they saw it contradicted their plea for unity among all God's people based on essentials, not opinions. They learned to grow and to glow. A generation later when Alexander Campbell could count hundreds of churches and a quarter of a million members on several continents he looked back to Brush Run as the beginning. He likened those earliest experiences to the acorn that God through the years turned into a mighty oak. —*the Editor*

OPPORTUNITIES IN FELLOWSHIP

by Robert O. Fife

(This essay was presented to the Conference of Fellowship Together in Serving Others at the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston last April. Having heard it, I was so impressed that I wanted our readers to be able to read it. This is the first of two parts. —*Ed.*)

I. *Introduction: Two incidents*

At the railroad station in Mukden, Manchuria, in 1904, two Russian army officers named Rennenkampf and Samsonov got into a fist-fight. Ten years later, with the outbreak of World War I, the same officers, now generals were placed in command of two Russian armies facing the Germans. Knowing the ill will between the two, General von Hindenburg attacked General Samsonov at Tannenberg. Hindenburg knew that his own outnumbered forces would be no match for the combined Russian armies. But he rightly predicted that Rennenkampf would not come to Samsonov's aid. The German army surrounded Samsonov's forces and destroyed them. Samsonov committed suicide. Then Hindenburg turned on Rennenkampf and forced him to retreat from East Prussia.

Viewing the event, a German officer said, "If the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, the battle of Tannenberg was lost on the railway platform at Mukden." The friendships formed in school had enabled the allied leaders at Waterloo to march united to victory. The enmity spawned at Mukden left the Russian generals divided and defeated.

Since being invited to address the theme before us, I have had difficulty putting this vignette from history aside. It seems to me that it speaks to us who are gathered to consider whether we who profess the Name of Jesus may labor together despite our differences, or whether our various differences are of such import as to forbid any common endeavors.

The historical incident to which I have referred involved a bitter, rancorous spirit harbored for years. We must confess that such a spirit has not been altogether absent among us. But most of us are like the soldiers who served under the Russian generals. They were committed to Mother Russia. We are committed to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. They did what they believed to be their duty. So would we. But in doing

their duty, soldiers who had never heard of Mukden found their fate bound up with what happened there. So is our present situation profoundly influenced by events which have preceded us, events both glorious and tragic.

Having been in the Service, I can well imagine there were indeed differences between the two Russian armies. So are we aware of differences among ourselves. But we must ask, Are these differences of such significance that we ought not, indeed cannot, join together to face a common enemy? Are our differences of such magnitude that they overshadow the common faith we confess in our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Messiah?

Because we may not in everything see eye to eye, can we not do anything shoulder to shoulder?

During our time together we shall be hearing of victories won through our working together. But unfortunately, such endeavors are not very common among us. In community after community Churches of Christ and Christian Churches pursue their own agendas, being either indifferent to each other, or often actually in opposition. Thus our call for restoration for the sake of unity, for the sake of mission has been brought into disrepute.

Once the Restoration Movement marched victoriously across the land, winning multitudes for our Christ and His Church. Indeed, it seemed for a while that the "Current Reformation" which our fathers advocated would win the nation. Now, in community after community we are in disarray over cups, classes, missionary societies, television programs, musical instruments, the role of women, and the authority of elders. Until these issues are settled, many of our congregations have been led to believe they dare not march together lest they be found faithless.

An accusing finger has often been pointed at those who introduced the organ, or who chose to work through missionary societies. But it seems no one is free from accusation, for across the whole spectrum of our differences each segment places the blame for division on the group which introduced the "innovations" it opposes, or opposes the "innovations" it approves.

We have become so involved in mutual finger-pointing and recrimination that the real Enemy laughs with delight. Knowing our hesitation to join forces for battle, he marshalls his militant regiments of secularism, materialism, drugs, sexual perversion, broken homes, cults and other false religions. Thus we, too, have become terribly vulnerable to the old strategy of "divide and conquer." Could it be that the Restoration Movement's battle for the soul of America has already been lost at our Mukdens?

The second incident is found in the Gospel according to Mark. There we read,

> John said unto him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. (Mk. 9:38-40).

I realize that for some, this incident bears no relationship to our present situation. The reason is that these brethren believe very strongly that congregations which exercised their autonomy to work through missionary societies, or use instruments in worship have violated the authority of Jesus. As Max R. Miller wrote a year ago concerning Restoration Forum IV in *Contending For The Faith* (April, 1986). Italics are mine:

> The title [of the Forum] assumes unity; the announced topics for discussion imply that unity has been accomplished. Just how the two divided bodies may worship together is not slated for discussion. There can be no unity — no Biblical fellowship *in any degree* — until this chasm can be spanned.

"No Biblical fellowship in any degree," says the article. Does this mean that if we cannot worship together, we are forbidden to serve together? Not even to the extent of joining to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, minister to the dying, or proclaim the Gospel?

If as some say, "worship" is what takes place in our assemblies on the Lord's Day, why should they object to our associating together "outside of worship" to do the Lord's will in the world?

I believe that the story of the "Unknown Wonderworker" *does* speak to our situation. Note the similarities:

First, the "Unknown Wonderworker" believed in the Name of Jesus. So do we.

Second, he used the Name of Jesus to perform works which Jesus would have done. So have we sought to do the Lord's will.

Third, Jesus honored the "Unknown Wonderworker's" use of His Name by granting His mighty power. We daily pray for the same blessing.

Fourth, despite the obvious evidence that Jesus was working through the "Unknown Wonderworker," the Twelve forbade him to continue.

So have some groups among us thought to monopolize the saving power of Jesus.

Fifth, the prohibition by the Twelve was made *on their own authority.*

Some among us have presumed similar authority.

Sixth, the reason for the prohibition was their sectarian spirit. Significantly, it would appear that there is not in this whole movement a leader who has not been excluded by someone.

Seventh, Jesus refused to approve of their prohibition. Neither is He bound to honor ours.

Eighth, as an ultimate irony, the Twelve had just failed to heal a demon possessed child. How often have we judged others who were doing greater works than we?

Ninth, when the Twelve enquired why they had failed, Jesus said, "This kind can go out by nothing, save by prayer." (Mk 9:17-29)

Perhaps we should hear again the words of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery:* "We *will* that the preachers and people, cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more, and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh."

The point of this incident which speaks so loudly to us is that the power of Jesus' Name is not subject to any limitations which we may presume to impose upon it. So some may refuse to join us in exalting the Lord by seeking to cooperate together in doing His will. But we choose not to forbid any good work done in His Name simply because someone "is not of us." I believe that if a disciple is doing Jesus' work through the power of Jesus' Name, He *is* one of us! Where the power of Jesus' Name is, there is Jesus; and where Jesus is, there is His Church.

But let me address our subject through another question:

II. *Does Fellowship in Anything Constitute Approval of Everything?*

This seems to be a genuine problem for many earnest brothers and sisters — a problem which our Movement must resolve. Let us examine it in the form of some simple questions:

Is it true that those who cannot in conscience worship together, ought not for the sake of conscience serve together? If I have "fellowship in any degree" with someone in error, am I "fellowshiping his error?" If so, am I prepared to have Jesus apply the same judgment toward me? If Christ died for us "while we were yet sinners," on what ground do I limit my fellowship to "perfect" saints?

But let us for the moment place the question amidst common life. Am I "endorsing the error" of a brother if I pump the water to fill a cup which he would give in the Name of Jesus to a famished soul? Am I "endorsing the sin" of a lifeboat crew if I man an oar to help rescue drowning seamen? If an orphanage were burning would I dare to join a bucket brigade drawn from the local pub, if it might save the children? If only one chaplain were allowed on death row, would I refuse to support him if he were Pre-Millennial?

What is the point of such questions? It is to demonstrate the fact that the *purpose* of one's involvement determines what he is "endorsing." The purpose of pumping the water for the "erring brother" is not to approve of his "error," but to help save a famished soul. The purpose of manning the lifeboat is not to approve the lifestyles of the crew, but to rescue the shipwrecked. The purpose of joining the bucket brigade is not to endorse

the local pub, but to save the children. The purpose of supporting the chaplain on death row is not to endorse Pre-Millennialism. Rather, it is to assure that condemned prisoners have an opportunity to confess Jesus before they meet Him in eternity.

The questions also demonstrate the *ground* of one's involvement. That ground is my understanding of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Surely, I ought not think that He would rather see the famished fall, than that I help an "erring brother" minister the water of life. Surely, Jesus would not rather that the shipwrecked perish than that I join with "sinners" in their rescue. Surely, Jesus would not have me stand aside while children perish, rather than join with the regulars of the local pub to save them. Surely, Jesus would not rather the prisoner die without the Gospel, than have the Gospel preached to him by a Pre-Millennialist.

It is therefore obvious that fellowship in something does not itself constitute approval of everything. We need to do away with that notion, or else we are doomed to fragment over and over again into a scattered army of little remaining use to our King. How often has fear of seeming to approve of some group's "error," caused us to refuse their hands extended for meeting the enormous need of a dying world?

Do we not know that our attempt to please Jesus by avoiding "fellowshiping error," may actually bring His judgment for failing to do what only united hands could accomplish? How tragic it would be to appear before Him in garments "unsullied by error," only to hear Him say,

> "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." (Mt. 25:45).

My brethren, the apostle Paul was willing to become "accursed" for the sake of Israel's salvation (Rom 9:3). And I am willing to pay whatever price is necessary to cooperate with "erring brethren" in doing the work of Jesus in the world. If to accomplish His mission the Saviour "ate with sinners," surely, to accomplish ours, we may by grace cooperate with "mistaken saints!"

The next issue of this journal will be the September number. We do not publish in July or August.

When you send us a change of address please give us both your old and new addresses.

If you receive a sample copy of this journal, it is your invitation to subscribe on a regular basis at only $5 a year or two years for $8.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

I have agreed to serve as a co-chairman for the capital funds campaign of the European Evangelistic Society, as a kind of liaison between the Society and Churches of Christ. Unfortunately, few leaders among us feel free to involve themselves in a mission of this kind since it means a working relationship with both Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches, but I am persuaded that there are Church of Christ people who would like to be involved in cooperative efforts such as the EES. Since the 1930's the EES, which is located in Tuebingen, Germany, has served as a study and research center for scholars from all persuasions of our Movement, and it seeks to demonstrate how the New Testament and Christian origins can effect a continuing reformation in Germany and all of Europe. Located as it is in the heart of the great Reformation tradition and in the shadow of one of Europe's great universities (Tuebingen), the EES is a mission for "the ancient gospel" to the scholars of the world. It has the potential of being our first workable strategy for world-wide evangelism among the sophisticated cultures of the world. Recent resident scholars to the EES from the Churches of Christ include James Thompson and Richard Oster. I solicit your interest in this program. We want to build up a list of "interested people" from Churches of Christ. It would involve you in some interesting reading and contacts. You might even one day visit the facility in Germany. Send me your name if we may put you on the EES's mailing list.

The latest word on the lawsuit at the 6th and Izard Church of Christ in Little Rock is that the church in a called meeting voted to dissolve its corporate status, presumably because this is what brought on the lawsuit in the first place and they want to keep it from happening again. This will have no effect upon the ruling that the court has already made, that the elders must open its financial records to any and all members of the congregation, nor will it affect the elder's appeal of that ruling to the state's supreme court. Because of the appeal the elders have not yet had to open up their books, in spite of the lower court's ruling. As a point of law, it makes no difference whether a church is incorporated or not, for it is still obligated, if it is congregational in government, to reveal its financial records to its members. A hierarchal system, such as the Roman Catholic, is different. A member loses all control of his money the moment he puts it in the collection plate. Is the Church of Christ congregational or hierarchal? Oddly enough, the elders in Little Rock contend that *that* Church of Christ is hierarchal, which must be a "first" in the history of a people that has always been proud of its congregational, autonomous polity.

The Troy Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan has issued a Statement of Faith and Practices, which is a wise thing for a congregation to do, not only for the information of new members but also in case of litigation. In view of the above news item from Little Rock, the following from the Troy document on "Decision Making" will prove to be interesting:

"The entire membership is vitally involved in the decision making process. The leadership actively enlists the talents of all members in re-assessing ongoing programs and seeking new directions. Major decisions are first addressed by the leaders, then submitted to the congregation. This type of decision includes, but is not limited to, the congregational budget, the selection of elders and deacons, and the selection of ministries that the congregation is to support. Decisions relating to the ongoing details of congregational life and work are normally handled at the regular monthly joint meeting of the leaders. Minutes of these meetings are published to the membership."

It is noteworthy that the Troy church also says, "While maintaining our own uniqueness as a church of Christ we will, where possible, cooperate with other churches and agencies in furthering God's kingdom on earth in areas such as evangelism, correcting and opposing social ills, and addressing the grievous problems of poverty, substance abuse and crime. We will continue to follow our heritage as a noninstrumental church of Christ, while cooperating with other congregations of our movement to realize the unity for which Jesus prayed."

BOOK NOTES

Jack Cottrell, a professor of theology at Cincinnati Christian Seminary, is the author of a new book entitled *What The Bible Says About God The Redeemer,* a 598-page study that is a theological education within itself. Beginning with the premise that the gravest question before the church is God Himself, he goes on to deal with the Righteousness of God, the holiness of God, the love of God, and God as redeemer. That he would write 68 pages on the immutability of God gives you some idea of the immensity of this study. It serves up lots of information for only $14.50 postpaid.

Ouida and I recently watched *The Restoration Pageant* on our VCR, which is the creation of Mary Harding, Box 58, Turner, OR 97392. We watched the whole sweep of the history of the church from Daniel's dream to the labors of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell, with due attention given to Martin Luther. Lots of vital information is packed into a single cassette. You can purchase it for $30.00 plus postage or rent it for a week for $18.00 plus postage by writing directly to the Oregon address.

Michael Hall, a psychologist-minister with a Church of Christ in Colorado, has written some exciting and useful material on self-understanding, which we recommend. One book is on *Emotions: Sometimes I Have Them/Sometimes They Have Me,* which tells us a lot about ourselves, some things we'd just as soon not know but need to know. The other is *Motivation: How To Be A Positive Force In A Negative World,* which if heeded could change our lives. They are $7.50 each, postpaid.

The entire set of Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger,* all 41 volumes, have been reprinted in a beautiful hardcover edition by College Press, which we can supply at $495.00, postpaid. We might be able to allow you to pay this out in monthly installments.

The Foolishness of God, by that forceful ecumenical thinker, Leslie Newbigin, is the kind of book our folk in Churches of Christ/ Christian Churches need to read, for we have not yet come to grips with the tough issues relating to the gospel and culture as Newbigin does. His chapter of what the church must do in our modern culture, in which he daringly states seven imperatives, is enormously significant. I was surprised that the first on his list was that the church must recover a true doctrine of last things or eschatology. This book is really on target! $8.50 postpaid.

If you want a readable book on what the New Testament is all about, how it was formed, and how it should be interpreted, I suggest a new one by Bruce Chilton (Yale) entitled *Beginning New Testament Study.* He has a chapter on what translation to use and how to use it. $10.50 postpaid.

READERS' EXCHANGE

Since reading your paper I've come to realize that there are others out there who are struggling with the same questions I struggle with. That is encouraging. I don't feel alone anymore. Your articles have helped me to get a grip on what is really important, that being my relationship to Christ and to others as I serve him. For many years I tried to prove to God that I was worthy of his love by doing all the right things, and it left me empty and doubtful that I was really a Christian. Thank God, I at last got free of legalism and found my way to Christ. Your paper has helped. I've never been so excited about the Christian life. It's wonderful to be free in Christ! *—Gail Brummett, LaPlace, LA.*

The other day as I was making application for a D. Min. program and was

asked to name the people who had had a major influence on my thinking, I was compelled to name you and Carl Ketcherside. I want to thank you for the way you have ministered to so many of us and for helping us to open our minds and hearts to those who may differ from us. My beginnings were in the Christian Church and Churches of Christ. I attended Abilene Christian College, and while there, you and Carl Ketcherside came to my apartment to speak to a number of graduate students. *—Merritt Watson, Bethany Christian Church (Disciples), Arapahoe, NC.*

I would appreciate knowing if female deacons have ever been common in churches of Christ and why there is a gap between the teaching of the scholars and the practice of the church. It seems from my reading that female deacons were the norm in the thinking of many church of Christ leaders of the 19th and 20th century. Those that I have read that favor or encourage female deacons include Alexander Campbell, J. M. Barnes, Tolbert Fanning, Robert Milligan, Moses Lard, David Lipscomb, J. W. McGarvey, Isaiah Grubbs, David King, and more recently, C. R. Nichol, J. Ridley Stroop, J. D. Thomas, Tom Olbricht, J. W. Roberts, and Carl Spain. I personally believe there were female deacons in the early church, and that we are going to have to face some hard decisions on this question in the future. *—J. Stephen Sandifer, Southwest Central Church of Christ, Houston, TX.*

(The reason you find virtual unanimity on the matter of deaconnesses in the primitive churches is that the relevant passages make it clear that both men and women served as deacons, which, interestingly enough, is the same word for minister or servant. And yet one can hardly find a Church of Christ today that has women as well as men deacons. Here we have the sociological influence, or an instance of where our culture has impacted our practice more than what the Bible actually teaches. The Church of Christ, certainly in terms of leadership, is a man's church. In spite of the Bible we have denied women their rightful place just as our culture in general has. *—Ed.*).

We are pleased that *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches*, by Leroy Garrett, is continuing to be read with interest. It is $21.95 postpaid, if you send a check with your order, or you can get a bonus copy when you send us a club of eight names, new or renewal, including your own, at $3 per name, total of $28.00.

We have five bound volumes of this journal available, and they cover eight years of publication. Each volume has its own theme: *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977), $5.95; *The Ancient Order* (1978), $5.95; *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* (1979-80), $10.50; *Jesus Today* (1981-82), $10.50; *The Doe of the Dawn* (1983-84), $10.50. All five volumes only $40.00, postpaid.

Walt Yancey's *Endangered Heritage: An Examination of Church of Christ Doctrine* deserves special mention. Here you have a responsible, resourceful voice from the pew that cannot easily be ignored. You will find his appeal for changes in the Church of Christ both kind and persuasive. $12.95 postpaid.

RESTORATION REVIEW

On Being Heavenly Minded

Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade all left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world. *—C. S. Lewis*

In This Issue:

Do We Sleep and Await a Final Judgment?

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